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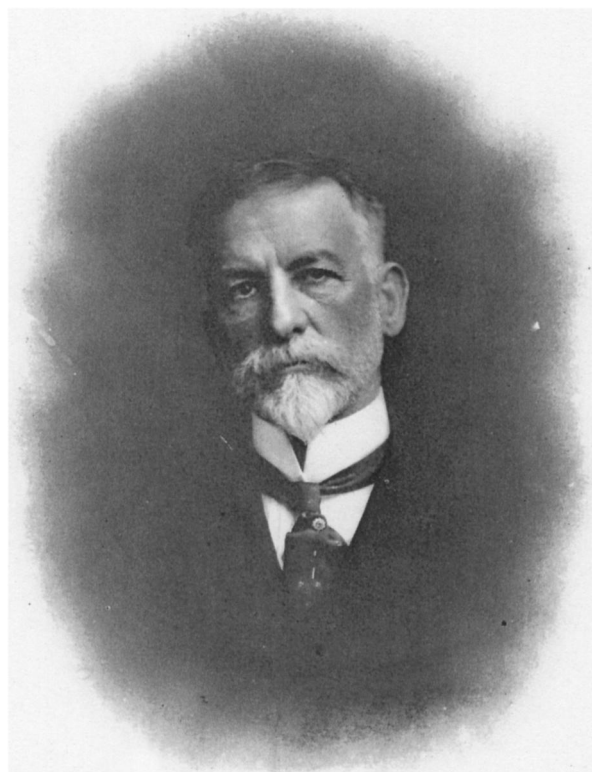
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Geo. T. Fryer

Joseph Bryan.

Flos ipse Civitatis.

A BRIEF MEMOIR

BY

W. GORDON McCABE,
PRESIDENT OF THE VIRGINIA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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April, 1909.

Joseph Bryan.

And let me treat him largely; I should fear
(If with too prying lens I chanced to err,
Mistaking catalogue for character,)
His wise forefinger raised in smiling blame—
Nor would I scant him with judicial breath;
And turn me critic in an epitaph.
I would but memorize the shining half
Of his large nature that was turned to me.

Thus Lowell, in his noble elegy on Agassiz, and such must be the scope and purport of this halting tribute to our noble "Virginia Worthy."

Since his death, the press throughout the whole country has teemed with appreciatory articles dealing with his marvellous energy, intuitive sagacity, bold initiative, and consummate administrative ability, as a man of affairs.

His success there was, indeed, brilliant, but it is the other "shining half" that shall abide with us, when its more material complement, if not altogether forgot, shall, perhaps, be unregarded.

Yet even here, there must needs be more or less of "catalogue," for 'tis a trite aphorism that "character," however virile and self-poised, always owes much to environment.

Joseph Bryan, eighth child of John Randolph Bryan and Elizabeth Tucker Coalter, his wife, was born at his father's plantation, "Eagle Point," in the county of Gloucester, Virginia, on August 13th, 1845. He died at his country-seat, "Laburnum," near Richmond, November 20th, 1908.

His father, John Randolph Bryan, godson and namesake of the brilliant and eccentric John Randolph of Roanoke, after re-

ceiving a sound education at excellent fitting-schools and at Yale, entered the Navy of the United States as Midshipman, at the age of seventeen, cruized in the Pacific, Mediterranean and elsewhere for six or seven years (with intervals of "leave"), rose to be Past-Midshipman, but resigned the service, and settled down as a planter, soon after his marriage to Mr. Randolph's favorite niece, Elizabeth Tucker Coalter, in January, 1830.

He was the very highest type of the country-gentlemen of his time—of aristocratic lineage (for he was the great-grandson of that "pestilential Rebel," Jonathan Bryan*,

*This Jonathan Bryan (grand-son of Joseph, the first of the name in the Colonies, who settled in South Carolina some time during the second-half of the seventeenth century) was born in 1708, left South Carolina (where he had several plantations) in 1733, joined Oglethorpe in Georgia, assisted him in selecting the site of Savannah, took part in his "expedition" against the Spaniards in Florida in 1736, and finally settled down on a plantation (which he called "Brampton"), on the Savannah river, a few miles above the newly-established town of the same name. He owned several other plantations in Georgia besides "Brampton."

For twenty years (1754-1774), he was a member of the King's Council of that Province, but he was "a furious Whig," and, on the first mutterings of resistance to the encroachments of the "Royal Prerogative," was so outspoken in his denunciations of any invasion of the rights of the people, that he was summarily expelled from that august body (1774). Whereupon, the "Union Society in Georgia," composed of equally recalcitrant gentry-folk, prayed his formal acceptance of a noble silver tankard of generous dimensions (still at "Laburnum"), on which one may see inscribed: "*To Jonathan Bryan, Esquire, who for Publickly Appearing in Favour of the Rights and Liberties of the People was excluded from His Majesty's Council of this Province, this Piece of Plate, as a Mark of their Esteem, is Presented by the Union Society in Georgia.*"

Ita cuique eveniat de republica meruit."

Three years later (1777), we find him "Acting Vice-President and Commander-in-Chief of Georgia and Ordinary of the Same." He took a very active part in the Revolution, was a member of the "Com-

"Acting Vice-President, Commander-in-Chief, and Ordinary of the Province of Georgia" in Revolutionary days), of courtly manners—a fine classical scholar, who to the day of his death could read, if not his "Plato," certainly his Livy and Horace "with his feet on the fender," as Emerson neatly puts it—a keen sportsman, a devoted Churchman, a kind neighbor, and the very soul of hospitality.

The mother, "Betty" Coalter, allied by blood to what were

mittee of Public Safety for Georgia," and, when he was surprised and seized on one of his plantations by a raiding party of British soldiers, General Prevost in a letter to Lord George Germain rejoices at the capture of such "a notorious ring-leader of Rebellion." (One sees that our Joseph Bryan came rightfully enough by his "Rebel spirit!")

He, with his son, James, was sent northward, by sea, to languish on one of the dreadful "prison-hulks" lying off Brooklyn, but in 1780 they were exchanged, and Jonathan at once returned to his treasonable activities.

But while Jonathan Bryan is best known to us on his militant side, it should be added that he was a man of deep and fervid piety, as was also his brother Hugh, both of whom fell under the religious influence of John Wesley, and, later, of George Whitefield, and became their intimates. Whitefield, as is well known, was a thorn in the flesh of the clergy of the Established Church, both in South Carolina and in Georgia, reviled the memory of Archbishop Tillotson as that of a lukewarm "Laodicean," prayed *extempore* prayers in churches of his own communion, preached in "Dissenting" meeting-houses, and generally scandalized the gentry as well as the clergy of both Provinces, who regarded him as "a fluent mountebank." But Hugh Bryan became his most extravagant disciple, and, in the matter of censuring the clergy, out-heroded Herod. Doyle, indeed, calls him "a reckless partisan" of Whitefield, who stopped at nothing in his religious zeal. Because of a violent letter written by Hugh, and corrected by Whitefield for the press, both of them (together with the printer) were threatened with criminal proceedings in South Carolina. Nothing came of it, and Hugh eventually drifting into a sort of "Mysticism" wrote a book about it, which no one seems to have understood but himself, if indeed, he did.

known in Colonial days as "the grandees" of Tidewater Virginia, was a beautiful woman of rare culture, wrapped up in husband and children, known and loved through all the countryside for her gentleness, her ready sympathy, cheerful piety and unobtrusive benefactions. Wordsworth might, indeed, have had her in his mind's eye when he spoke of—

"Those blessed ones who do God's will and know it not."

Such was the refined, cultured, and wholesome home that

The family grew apace in wealth and influence, and Jonathan's grandson, Joseph (grandfather of our Joseph), being the only child and heir, was reckoned one of the richest planters in Georgia.

Joseph was a man of vigorous native parts, which had been sedulously cultivated by training in the best schools at home and abroad. After completing his academic studies at the University of Cambridge in England, he returned to America, and in 1793 studied law in Philadelphia under Edmund Randolph, at that time Washington's Attorney-General. Here, he had for his fellow-student (there were but these two), and room-mate, John Randolph of Roanoke, between whom and himself there sprang up a friendship that was romantic in its intensity. Mr. Randolph has left us a picture of him as vivid as any that was ever drawn by the hand of that eccentric genius—of his fine bearing and notable beauty of person, adding (and this should arrest the interest of students of heredity), "he was brave even to rashness and his generosity bordered on profusion." He further descants on the brilliancy of his intellectual gifts and on his sobriety of judgment, and declares "he has rendered me such service as one man can seldom render another." He does not enlighten us as to what that service was. *Apropos*, Moncure D. Conway, speaking of John Randolph, in his *Omitted Chapters of History, Disclosed in the Life and Letters of Edmund Randolph* (p. 137), says: "The Attorney-General's other student, John Bryan" (a slip for "Joseph") "got John Randolph out of a scrape so serious that neither would reveal it." This Joseph Bryan, after finishing his law course under Edmund Randolph, went again to Europe (this time for travel, not for study), "made the grand tour," and on his return to Georgia in 1802, was almost at once elected to Congress, in which he served for three sessions, but resigned on his marriage in 1805, and retired to one of

"Joe" Bryan (for no one ever called him Joseph) was blessed with in his boyhood, and, in the coming years, when tried by both extremes of fortune, remembering the lessons taught there, he showed himself equal to each and proved himself worthy of the noble stock from which he sprung.

When this lovely Virginia matron lay a-dying, she called her little brood about her, and taking them one by one in her arms, whispered, along with the mother-kiss, a few words of

his estates (known as "Nonchalance") on Wilmington Island, having decided that he would find his truest happiness in the domestic circle, and among his beloved books.

He died at the early age of thirty-nine, leaving a beautiful widow (who in time married Col. Scriven, of Georgia), and five small children, the oldest of whom was Jonathan Randolph Bryan ("Jonathan" after his great-grandfather, and "Randolph" after the father's bosom friend of "Roanoke"). The lad was always from the first called "Randolph" and, in time, the "Jonathan" was changed to "John."

A year after his father's death (1812), the little fellow was sent by his mother to school in Savannah. There he boarded in the family of a Madame Cottineau, who with her children, had fled to America from the horrors of the negro insurrection in San Domingo. Madame Cottineau's "spiritual director" was a certain accomplished French ecclesiastic, the Abbé Carle, who had accompanied the family in their flight, and under his care little Randolph learned to speak French with elegance and precision, besides being taught the rudiments of Latin.

At ten years of age (1816), Randolph, with a younger brother, Thomas, came to Virginia at the earnest solicitation of the master of "Roanoke," who wanted his namesake near him and who urged the better facilities for education in this State.

Here he remained at school for four years, he and his brother spending all their winter holidays and summer vacations at "Roanoke," and from that time Mr. Randolph always regarded and treated him as a son. At the expiration of this time, he returned to Georgia to be with his mother, and, after spending two years at school there, came North in the summer of 1822, where for a short time he attended a fitting-school at Repton, Conn., and in October of that year, entered Yale College at the age of sixteen.

loving counsel, well within their comprehension, then, smiling, quietly fell on sleep.

The memory of that scene and of her words never faded from heart or brain of "little Joe," and in the days of stress and storm (happily not many) he ever counted them a precious sheet-anchor in life.

On the death of his mother, he entered the "Episcopal High School" (near Alexandria, Virginia), then under the

He remained at Yale but a single year, for having applied for a warrant as Midshipman in the Navy, of the United States, his application was promptly granted, chiefly through the active interest of his father's old friend and neighbor, Col. Edward Tatnall, of Georgia, brother of Commodore Josiah Tatnall, of "Peiho" fame, afterward a distinguished officer of the Confederate Navy.

He remained in the navy little over seven years, seeing much active sea-service, but in January, 1830, he married John Randolph's "darling niece" (as Randolph calls her in his letters), "Betty Coalter," at her father's home, the historic "Chatham," opposite Fredericksburg, and almost immediately thereafter resigned his commission, the young couple taking up their residence at "Eagle Point." There were ten children born of this union.

Mrs. John Randolph Bryan died at "Eagle Point" in 1856. Her husband survived until 1887. They sleep side by side in the beautiful old family burying-ground almost within a stone's throw of the home of their married life.

There is no need of any note touching "Betty Coalter's" family. The history of her family is, in great measure, the history of the Colony and of the Commonwealth.

[I am indebted for the larger portion of *data* relating to Jonathan Bryan and his descendants to the courtesy of the Rev. C. Braxton Bryan, D. D., of Petersburg, Virginia, a younger brother of the subject of this slight memoir. Dr. Bryan is a keen antiquarian, and by patient industry has collected a great mass of most interesting and valuable papers and records touching his family. As he has "the pen of a ready writer," it is greatly to be hoped that he may be induced to publish in this, or some other historical magazine, or even in more ambitious guise, the results of his researches concerning the Bryans of Georgia and Virginia and their times.—W. G. McC.]

headmastership of the Rev. John P. McGuire, and remained there until the beginning of the war (1856-1861).

Though not sixteen when the war began, he was eager to enlist at once, but he was a delicate lad, and, as an ever obedient son, he yielded to his father's earnest wishes in the matter, and remained with him at "Eagle Point," and, later on, at another of his plantations, "Carysbrook," in Fluvanna county (whither they went on the occupation of the former by the enemy), until the autumn of 1862. In October of that year, he entered the Academic Department of the University of Virginia, where he remained until July of '63. He was now keener than ever to be "at the front" (as the phrase was then, instead of the modern "on the firing line"), when, by an untoward accident, he broke his bridle-arm badly, and was again condemned to inaction, while his brothers were winning "glory" in the field. He felt that he must do something, so he took service for a few months in the "*Nitre and Mining Bureau*," donned his grey uniform and was assigned to duty in Pulaski county, Southwest Virginia.

In May 1864, he got leave of absence, immediately volunteered with the "Second Company, Richmond Howitzers," and took part in the sanguinary engagement of May 18th at Spotsylvania C. H. On the expiration of his leave, he had, of course, to report for duty to his chief in Pulaski, but his arm was now sound again, and after a few months' time he joyfully took service as a simple trooper in Captain Mountjoy's Company of Mosby's command.

He had not been in the command a month, when he was shot twice and sent back to "Carysbrook." But his wounds soon healed, and back he went to Mosby, and from that time to the very end was to be found riding hard by the bridle-rein of that brilliant partisan officer in all his daring raids and desperate hand-to-hand encounters.

No more devoted soldier of "the Lost Cause" ever wore his country's gray. He believed in the righteousness of that Cause with all the passion of his mighty heart, steadfastly counting it worthy all the splendid sacrifices made for it by his people, for in it, and through it, as he clearly discerned, had been developed to heroic pitch by fire of battle the noblest virtues that God has allowed to mortal man.

Unless forbidden by the imperious demands of great interests (in which were involved, apart from his own, the interests of others), he never in all the years missed a "Re-union" of Lee's veterans. To any one of these veterans in want, his purse was always open, and the writer of these lines happens to know that when, at last, fortune was lavish of her favors, he gave a trusted comrade, with characteristic prodigality, *carte blanche* to relieve the necessities of every indigent Confederate soldier, or widow of such soldier, in his county, instructing him to "draw at sight" for whatever amount he deemed proper. This comrade expended literally thousands of dollars in this noble benefaction, which, it is safe to affirm, is here made known for the first time to even the intimate friends of Mr. Bryan. He made but one stipulation—that neither they nor anyone else was to know from whom the money came.

It would take pages, indeed, to set down like good deeds which he did by stealth, and of which there is no record save in hearts grateful to the unknown donor.

Yet, strong and unwavering as was his conviction of the absolute righteousness of our contention, with that sanity of vision and breadth of tolerance, which characterized him in things, great and small, he loyally accepted the results of the unequal contest, and, with broad patriotism, urged by pen and tongue a thorough reconciliation between the sections.

It was mainly because of his belief that the various "pa-

triotic societies" throughout the country were no mean agents in fostering this spirit of reconciliation, that he joined "*The Society of Colonial Wars*" (of which he was made President), "*The Society of the Sons of the American Revolution*," and became a member of "*The Society of the Cincinnati*." He also took an active interest in the affairs of the "*Phi Beta Kappa*."

The disastrous end of the war found his father broken in fortune, as was well nigh every man of former affluence in the State. "Carysbrook" might be held with rigid economy, but "Eagle Point" had to go. To anticipate a little—that was, indeed, a day of (what the Romans would term) "pious happiness," when "Joe" Bryan, having surmounted earlier difficulties, was enabled to buy back his boyhood's home, remodeling and refitting its interior with such faultless taste and luxury, as must have compelled a nod of approval (could they know) from departed "grandees," who "rarely hated ease," and had been wont to live "in a manner becoming a gentleman of fortune."

Just before the end came, a band of Mosby's men had captured a Federal paymaster, plethoric with "greenbacks," and Joe's share was a goodly "wad" of the same. But when those bold horsemen disbanded, April 21st (twelve days after the final scene at Appomattox C. H.), the big-hearted young Virginian gave every dollar he had in the world to an impecunious comrade eager to get back to his home in Kentucky.

Thus penniless, yet undismayed by the "*res angusta domi*," young Bryan, bent on completing his interrupted education, cast about for the means to secure that cherished object.

Scarce six weeks after Lee's surrender, his chance came, and, as always, he was swift to seize it.

It was well known to his companions that he was not only a superb rider (as all Virginia boys were in those days), but

a fine judge of horse-flesh, not excluding "the humble, but useful, mule."

Captain William Glassell (who had proved himself a daring officer in the Confederate naval operations in Charleston harbor) now approached him with a scheme for purchasing "Government mules," that were being sold for a song by the thousand in Washington, on the disbandment of the vast Union armies.

"Joe" saw instantly the great possibilities of the proposal and jumped at it.

The government no longer wanted the mules, and there was nothing that the Virginia and Carolina farmer needed more. Glassell was to furnish the money (obtained from a brother in California); "Joe," the experience.

The scheme proved a brilliant stroke of business from the start. They went back again and again for "more mules." They grew rich and incautious. Some envious rival whispered the Government officials that the shrewd mule-buyer was "one of Mosby's men," and they were ordered to leave town at once.

That night they slipped away, but the mules (branded "U. S.") went along too.

They had "turned the trick"—the profits were divided—and that autumn young Bryan entered again the Academic Department of the University of Virginia.

Little did the struggling young undergraduate of twenty dream then that in the coming years he was to become a member of the governing body, and a munificent benefactor, of that great foundation of learning.

For two years he pursued his academic studies*, and in

*He attended the "Schools" of Latin, Greek, Mathematics, Modern Languages, History and Literature, Physics, Chemistry, and Moral

October 1867 entered the Law School. At the end of the session, his money was exhausted, and he was unable to return another year for his degree.

But he had compassed more than he had hoped for—the foundation had been laid deep and strong, and, like Shakespeare's "puissant prince," he was "in the very May-morn of his youth, ripe for mighty enterprises."

During the summer (1868), he went before the judges of the Virginia Court of Appeals, passed satisfactorily the "Bar Examination," and at once began the practice of law at Palmyra, in Fluvanna county, within easy riding distance of "Carysbrook," where his father was still living.

Here he remained but two years, moving in 1870 to Richmond, which seemed to offer a more promising field for substantial success in his profession.

Allied by blood to many of the most prominent families of the capital, a young man of fine presence and engaging manners, with the sure passport to his people's heart of honorable wounds, he speedily became one of the most popular men in the community, and his foot was now firmly set on "the first round of the ladder."

It has been deemed not impertinent to set down here these personal details of his "years of preparation," because, outside his family and the circle of his intimates, few people know little, if anything, about them.

In 1871, he married Miss Isobel L. Stewart, daughter of John Stewart, of "Brook Hill," and, within a few years, so many large financial interests were confided to his management, that gradually he relinquished the active practice of his

Philosophy. The catalogues of those years do not state the "Schools" in which he graduated. In 1907, Mr. Bryan received the degree of LL. D. from Washington and Lee University.

profession and entered upon his memorable career as a man of affairs.

The story of his phenomenal success in that career, which death cut short in the fulness of beneficent fruition—his intuitive sagacity—quick decisive action, when once his mind was made up—his indomitable pluck and imperturbable “nerve,” when financial storm burst over the country—his prodigious industry and intelligent alertness—his inflexible integrity—his absolute observance of “the golden rule”—his large-hearted generosity—his happy secret of winning the confidence and affection of his men, who were proud to take his wage, and of imbuing them to a unique degree with his own enthusiasm for the prosperous issue of the work in hand—his munificent unselfishness in furthering every scheme for the moral and material advancement not only of his city and his county, but of the whole Commonwealth—all this has been told by his civic and industrial colleagues, who, following his initiative, worked in unison with him, and who, beyond all others, are able to speak with authority.

It is, in truth, no exaggeration to say that, in his immediate industrial domain, he happily solved the vexed problem of “capital and labor.” Though an aristocrat by instinct and heredity, the humblest artisan never felt him condescend, for, with high and low alike, he was always his natural self, and amid all sorts and conditions of men “bore himself at manhood’s simple level.”

During the last ten years or more of his life, the mental and physical strain on him was enormous, but the spirit of the man was high and invincible to the end.

He not only had on his hands the exclusive management for years of a great manufacturing plant, in which he and those near to him had a tremendous stake and on the successful maintenance of which depended the support of thousands

of bread-winners and their families, but, in addition, he shared the direction and control of so many large corporations, industrial and otherwise, from New York to Alabama, that only the names of the more important may be enumerated here.

Yet (and this is the paramount object-lesson of his noble life), he was never too busy to be accessible to the humblest of those who served him, white or black—never so absorbed, no matter what the stress of urgent engagements, as to turn a deaf ear to the cry of distress. The busy brain never held the mastery over the generous heart. The active hand was always the open hand. Above all, he knew *how to give*, a thing that many of the most philanthropic never learn. It was because his was what Dante finely calls “the intellect of love.” Those who came to him for help were given, in addition to the assistance sought, such words of unaffected sympathy, such kindly encouragement, that, not seldom, they carried away something still more precious than the gift itself—the largess of a rekindled self-respect, a dawning hope, that “changes winter into spring.”

No doubt, he often gave foolishly, as the world counts it. On that score remonstrance was hopeless. He used to laugh his cheery laugh and say, “Oh, well, I’ll acknowledge it’s selfish, for, after all, I get so much more pleasure out of it than they possibly can.”

Even in cases where there could be no question of pecuniary aid, his ready sympathy, his delicate perceptions, his high ideals of conduct, made him one of the wisest and most helpful of counsellors in nice and difficult situations.

Insensibly there arises before the inner eye that shining Vision that came to Abou Ben Adhem, when, awaking from his “dream of peace,” he sees an Angel in the flooding moonlight “writing in a book of gold,” and asks:

"'What writest thou?' The Vision raised its head;
And, with a look made of all sweet accord,
Answer'd—'The names of those who love the Lord.'
'And is mine one?' said Abou. 'Nay, not so!'
Replied the Angel. Abou spoke more low,
But cheerly still, and said—'I pray thee then,
Write me as One that loves his fellow men!'
The Angel wrote and vanish'd. The next night
It came again, with a great wakening light,
And show'd their names whom love of God had bless'd:
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest."

When we consider the long array of organizations—religious, philanthropic, patriotic, social and economic—in which he was no mere "figure-head," but an impelling force, it seems almost incomprehensible how he managed to find time to play the active part he did in so many, and such widely varying, fields of business endeavor.

Apart from his mechanical and industrial activities (such as the *Schloss Sheffield Works*, the *American Locomotive Co.*, and others of like kind), he was a director in the *Southern Railway Company*, director in the *New York Equitable Life Assurance Association* (this, at the express solicitation of Grover Cleveland, when Chairman of the "Committee on Reorganization"), a member of the *Board of Visitors of the University of Virginia*, a trustee of the "*University Endowment Fund*," President of the *Virginia Historical Society*, member of the "Advisory Board" of the *Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities*, a most active and munificent vestryman in two parishes (one in Henrico, and the other in Gloucester), a member of the *Standing Committee of the Diocese of Virginia*, a delegate, year after year, to the *Episcopal Council of Virginia*, a delegate, from 1886 to the day of his death, to the *General Convention* of his church in the United States (which convened in Richmond two years ago,

owing in chief measure to his instance), a trustee of the "*Episcopal High School*," a director of the "*Jamestown Exposition*" (the chief management of which was twice pressed upon him and declined), and last, though by no means least, the controlling power in directing the policies of a great daily paper, of which he was sole owner.

And it must be remembered that this takes no account of his almost numberless municipal and county activities, or of his "social duties," which last were enormous to a man of his genial temperament, and wide acquaintance, to whom open-handed hospitality was an instinct and an inheritance, and who was never happier than when he could gather about him under his own roof-tree kinsmen and comrades and friends.

His fondness for entertaining amounted, indeed, well-nigh to a passion. At "Eagle Point" especially, whither he would steal away at times from the incessant demands of business for a week or ten days, his unbounded hospitality recalled to more than one of his guests of a past generation those palmy *ante-bellum* days, when Virginia squires, descendants of the men, who "rode with Spotswood 'round the land, and Raleigh 'round the seas," still kept bright in our "Old Dominion" by song and hunt and open board the brave traditions of Yorkshire and of Devon.

Though an ardent "Churchman," and, beyond question, the most influential layman of his communion in the diocese, he was absolutely free from anything savoring of ecclesiastical narrowness or sectarian prejudice. No Baptist nor Presbyterian, nor Methodist, no Jew nor Gentile (be his creed what it might), no Salvation Army "Captain" nor negro evangelist, ever came to him in vain, seeking aid to further the cause of the Master. Not only did he eagerly open his purse to them, but, in some unaccountable fashion, he found the time to listen patiently to their plans, to discuss these plans

minutely, and to give them freely of the rich stores of his experience as a man of affairs. When the Union Seminary (Presbyterian) was moved from Hampden-Sidney to Richmond, he was one of the most liberal subscribers to the fund necessary for the undertaking, and his last appearance in public (ten days before his death, when he was so ill that he could scarcely stand) was to urge upon his fellow-citizens the completion of the endowment fund for the "Greater Richmond College" (Baptist), to which he himself had made an almost princely contribution.

Of all the secular organizations which claimed his active interest and service, the chief in his affections was our *Historical Society*, which was the constant recipient of his lavish benefactions and of which he was for so many years the efficient President. It was largely through his influence that Mrs. Stewart, of "Brook Hill," and her daughters made to the Society the munificent donation of a permanent home (the old residence of General Robert E. Lee), and it is an open secret that, had he lived, he purposed to erect a fire-proof annex to the "Society House" as a secure repository for our manuscript treasures.

Scarceless less keen, however, was his interest in the affairs of our sister Society, the "*Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities*," to whose members it must prove a grateful, if mournful, reflection that one of the last of his many benefactions was made to them, when he and his wife presented to the Association a superb bronze statue (to be unveiled soon on Jamestown Island) of his pet hero, the virtual founder of Virginia—the man of blood and iron, "John Smith of Willoughbie *juxta* Alford in the Countie of Lincolne."

Paramount, indeed, of all earthly sensibilities (save love of family), was his devotion to his mother-state. It was no abstract sentiment, but the passionate personal loyalty that a

Hielander of the eighteenth century felt for the chief of his clan, and, from boyhood to gracious age, burned with a deep and steady glow. He was saturated with her history and traditions. In the moments of leisure that came to him, he never tired of reading or discussing some book dealing with her genesis and development, and in his noble library at "Laburnum" is to be found a priceless collection of "*Virginiana*," which, in point of completeness and rareness, stands unrivalled of any collection, public or private, in America.

His intimates will long recall how the color would steal into his cheek and the fire kindle in his luminous eye, as some eloquent speaker would recount the pre-eminent part that Virginia had played in establishing the new nation and in shaping its destinies for years after—how breathlessly he hung upon the glowing periods portraying the instant readiness of her people—down through all the centuries, whether under Nathaniel Bacon or under Robert Lee—to attest by their blood their devotion to those principles, which men of their breed had wrested from John at Runnymede.

He loved to hear recounted, and to recount in turn, stories of the beautiful and gracious old civilization, which he had seen swept away by war and the subsequent shabby tide of "Progress." Though unconscious of it, he himself was, in his generation, a consummate flower of that civilization, which, in the old Roman phrase, "was of its own kind," and to which, despite his twentieth-century spirit of enterprise, he always turned with wistful eyes.

Once, when we were travelling together in the far South and our talk was of the proper ambitions in life, he turned to the writer and said with the most perfect simplicity, "of earthly things, my highest ambition is to live and die as becomes a Virginia gentleman."

Doubtless, it seemed to those of a younger generation that,

in his passionate loyalty, this man of ardent temperament somewhat idealized the picture that he drew of those brave old days, but he had seen with his own eyes, in his boyhood and young manhood, its high-bred simplicity, its generous courage, its unfailing courtesies to gentle and simple alike, its reverence for women, its simple faith in things religious, and he believed with all the fervor of his soul that it was the highest and finest type of civilization in the western world. He held with Emerson that "the true test of civilization is not the census or the size of the cities, nor the crops—no, *but the kind of men the country turns out.*" Tried by this test, Virginia civilization need fear comparison with none other on earth.

As to slavery, he had seen only the gracious, kindly side of it, as actually administered in Virginia and not as grotesquely caricatured in "*Uncle Tom's Cabin.*" Like the great majority of gentle folk in Virginia, his family had long regarded slavery as wrong in principle, if beneficent in practice, and as an economic blunder, the remedy for which lay in gradual emancipation. In his father's and mother's immediate family connection, the opinions of John Randolph of Roanoke (his father's "foster-father," his mother's "dearest uncle"), naturally counted for much—of even greater weight were the views of his mother's grandfather, the learned and accomplished St. George Tucker, a judge of the General Court, who had succeeded George Wythe as professor of law at William and Mary College, and who afterwards became President of the Court of Appeals and a United States Circuit Judge. He remembered that as early as 1796, St. George Tucker had published his "*Dissertation on Slavery with a Proposition for its Gradual Abolition in Virginia*—that John Randolph in his will had manumitted all his slaves, stating in that last testament that he "greatly regretted that he had ever

been the owner of one"—that Randolph's brother Richard (the language of whose will is even more emphatic as to the evils of the system) had done the same, as had Edmund Randolph at the time of his resignation as Washington's Secretary of State.

But he also remembered, with a sort of righteous indignation, and with a virile scorn, the mawkish maunderings of the self-righteous Pharisees, who, harping on "the blot of slavery," derided Virginia's claim to a high civilization.

He had at his finger's end the whole story of how Colonial Virginia repeatedly during the eighteenth century tried to rid herself of the moral and economic burden, but had always been estopped by the mother-country—how in the Convention of 1787, that framed the Constitution, Virginia's efforts to put a sharp and definitive stop to the slave-trade, had been defeated by the votes of the New England delegates—finally, how the carefully matured plans of the leading men of the Commonwealth put forward in 1831-32 to bring about gradual emancipation, had been wrecked by the insolent and aggressive interference of the fanatics, who afterwards reviled her as a "slave-holding oligarchy."

His own relations with the large number of colored servants employed both at "Laburnum" and at his plantation, "Eagle Point," were quite those of *ante-bellum* days, when the master was the friend, supporter and defender, and the servant (they were never called "slaves" by gentle-folk in the old days) proudly regarded himself as a member of the family. His affectionate personal interest in them, when ill or in trouble of any sort, was constant—his benefactions innumerable, extending even to their relatives not in his employ. In turn, they simply worshipped "Mars' Joe," as they always called him ("freedom" or no "freedom"), and, when the end came, eight of these faithful servitors ten-

derly bore him, shoulder high, to his last resting place, in the quiet country churchyard, on a spot overlooking a typical lowland Virginia landscape—the land he loved best.

His services to his city, to his county, and to the State cannot be detailed here. In time, the actual record of them will most probably be known to few beyond determined students or “the curious.”

But they will long endure as a great tradition.

He was never in public life, as the term is commonly understood, nor did he hold any public office of importance.

Yet he was reckoned the first citizen not only of Richmond, but of the whole Commonwealth.

No such private funeral was ever seen in the State, though the simple rites were held in a country church several miles from the city.

But, while not holding public office, he frequently spoke at great public meetings, and his words always carried tremendous weight. He was not so much an orator in the highest sense of the word, as he was a most persuasive and convincing speaker—his frankness won good-will and his transparent honesty carried conviction. His manner was singularly simple, earnest, virile, without a touch of that artificial gravity, that so many “weighty orators” and “ripe divines” see fit to assume in delivering themselves of ponderous platitudes.

He wrote quite as well as he spoke, and when any “burning question” kindled the eager interest of the people, the leading articles, easily recognized as from his pen, in the great journal he controlled, were accepted, even by those opposed to him, as the candid utterances of a man, who had made conscientious investigation, and, who, with an eye single to the honor and well-being of city, State or country, presented to them the truth as apprehended by a clear head and an honest heart.

He would resolutely put aside the most pressing business matters to thus give editorial expression to his convictions, whenever he deemed that the public weal demanded it, for he was no opportunist, but held to Archbishop Whately's admirable precept that "it is not enough to believe what you maintain, but you must maintain what you believe, and maintain it because you believe it."

Here, as in his public speaking, he struck straight from the shoulder, but never "below the belt," for, as has just been said, even his political opponents, while regarding him, as they did every other independent thinker, as a wrong-headed *doctrinaire*, allowed that he was scrupulously fair.

There was, however, one exception, and the incident is worth recalling, as it made a profound impression at the time.

Some subordinate on the staff of his paper, "*The Times*" (for it was before the days of the consolidated "*Times-Dispatch*"), wrote an account of what had taken place at a meeting of the "City Democratic Committee." A member of that committee took umbrage at the printed report and immediately demanded a retraction from the editor. Mr. Bryan had not even seen the article, but he at once made careful investigation, satisfied himself that his subordinate had reported the proceedings accurately, and declined to make any correction or apology. The aggrieved politician, thereupon, demanded "the satisfaction usual among gentlemen." Mr. Bryan, with a courage that few can realize to-day, promptly declined the challenge in a letter that is a model of courtesy, firmness and cogent reasoning, the blended spirit of an humble Christian and fearless citizen, sworn to maintain the law, breathing through every line of it.

Duelling, many sober-minded people still think, had its undoubted uses in an earlier stage of society, but, in the evolution of manners, those uses had passed. "*D'autres temps,*

d'autres mœurs," as Voltaire pithily says. In Virginia, "the code" may be said to have received its mortal wound from the tragic Mordecai-McCarty duel—the refusal of a man of Mr. Bryan's unquestioned courage to accept a challenge, gave it the *coup-de-grâce*.

To those who possessed the privilege of his intimate personal friendship, it is but sober truth to declare that his loss is irreparable. Other civic leaders as public-spirited as he, will, no doubt, arise again, but to his old companions-in-arms, whose faces have long since been turned towards the westering sun, there can never be another "Joe" Bryan. They loved him so dearly, apart from admiration, because he made them feel that their affection was returned with like intensity and with an invincible fidelity.

In what is called general society, he will be missed longer than falls to lot of most men in this prosaic age. He was possessed of a singularly handsome person (the outward and visible sign of the inward refinement and nobility of his character), a happy knack of saying those charming "nothings," that yet count for so much, an infectious gayety of spirit, a certain boyish ingenuousness and eagerness at times, and with never the faintest touch of supercilious condescension.

It was said of the late Lord Houghton that he never came into a room without making every man and woman in it have a kindlier feeling for each other. That is a beautiful thing to be said of any one, and it was absolutely true in the case of "Joe" Bryan. He seemed to diffuse, as it were, a sort of social sunshine wherever he might be—to create an atmosphere of courtesy, refinement and good-will, as he went along the pleasant ways of the world. He carried the same air with him when he slipped away to enter the sombre abodes of want and misery and lightened their gloom by the radiance of his presence.

Who of us, indeed, can ever forget the compelling charm of that presence in all social intercourse—his air of distinction—the unconscious urbanity, that in some nameless way suggests aristocratic birth—his “Old World” courtesy to women—his winning smile, that could so subtly express either affection or amusement—the kindly greeting in “the eyes whose sunshine runs before the lips”—his unaffected modesty—his lively play of mind, and those flying shafts of nimble wit that never left a sting.

But, after all, it was with three or four of his intimates grouped around his generous board that he was seen at his best as a charming host. There, under his own roof-tree, one best discerned the manifold and enchanting graces of his private life.

He possessed a keen zest for everything which makes life enjoyable, and had an instinctive talent for eliciting the best that was in his guests. He delighted in “chaff” and in that admirable “nonsense,” which is the small change of thorough good-fellowship. He had a large fund of anecdote himself, and was the most sympathetic of listeners when a good story was told.

As no coarse thought ever found lodgment in his pure soul, so no coarse word ever passed his lips. An “improper story”—not, of course, told at his board, but elsewhere in the world of men—always froze him—though even then he never forgot his innate courtesy. But there was just a hint of austerity in his manner, that caused the lively *raconteur* never to try the experiment again in his presence.

His face was singularly mobile and almost instantly betrayed any strong emotion that possessed him.

At times, in intimate personal talk (*à deux*), when the generous heart and busy brain were devising some beneficence,

that must prove its own reward, one might mark, for a fleeting moment, a look of exaltation, a sort of spiritual radiance, that made his face beautiful and noble beyond the compass of words.

In the midst of the poignant sorrow of the present, there is surely some adumbration of comfort in the thought—nay, in the assured belief—that the glory of that rapt expression, that ethereal radiance, which transfigured his countenance here only at rare and intermittent moments, is no longer evanescent “in the land beyond the stars,” but glows with ever steadier glow, forever and forever, in the light supernal, now that the mortal has put on immortality.

His married life was ideally full and happy, but there are matters too sacred to be more than alluded to in print, especially when one is honored with the confidence of the living. Rash, indeed, would be the hand, that would seek to rend the veil from the sanctities of that beautiful home-life, which was, in truth, the very citadel of his aspirations and affections. It may be said, however, without impertinence, that, though he had reached three score years and more, he kept in absolute touch with the younger generation, and his affectionate *camaraderie* with his own sons and his playfulness with his grandchildren was lovely thing to see.

Before the beauty of his Christian life, one pauses abashed, and almost fears to speak at all.

The writer can only set down again the few halting lines, that he wrote, through blinding tears, the very night that this guileless spirit passed away and left us desolate.

If to labor is to pray— if to visit the fatherless and the widow and bind up the broken-hearted and keep one's self unspotted from the basenesses of the world, be, in truth, pure religion and undefiled,—then are we sure that, when “the one

clear call" came, this gentle and fearless spirit "crossed the bar" with no misgiving, but went with the glad alacrity and unquestioning faith of a little child to "meet his Pilot face to face."

When his old comrades stood by his coffin, and, shaken with sobs, looked down on that gracious figure, "hushed in the alabaster arms of death" and clad in the simple jacket of gray, in which, more than forty years ago, he had swept through the dust and-sweat of battle, storming into the fight in all the joyous valor of his youth—gazing on his delicate patrician features, clear cut as a Sicilian cameo and accentuated into an even finer beauty than that they wore in life—surely there must have flashed through the mind of more than one of them those words that Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Gloucester touching the dead king:

A sweeter and a lovelier gentleman
Framed in the prodigality of nature. . .
The spacious world cannot again afford.

"Life is an instrument with many stops," and, good player that he was, he used the best of them with courage, constancy, vigor and discernment. In his young manhood, he knew what it was to be very poor—he came, in later years, to know what it was to be very rich, but the sweetness of his nature and the vigor of his soul disdained to consider the temptations that both offer, and he remained, through storm and sunshine, just the same—his own simple self—pure, fearless, just, generous, and loving.

Those who did not know him, if their eyes ever chance to light on these pages, will say that what has been set down here is all mere eulogy. No doubt, it will sound like eulogy to them. Yet every word of it is simple truth, only marred in the telling, for to those who knew him as he really was, any

portrait, drawn by even the most "practiced hand," must prove at best but a blurred semblance of the noble gentleman, whose simple, unselfish, godly life disdains, as it were, all human panegyric.

And now we have lost that bright and vigorous and lovable personality, that represented to not a few of us so much of the joy of life.

As is the inexorable law of being, even the memory of that radiant figure shall first grow dim, and then altogether die out, as the men and women of his generation pass away, unless, indeed, a grateful capital shall seek to perpetuate in enduring bronze the form and figure of one justly counted the greatest citizen of the Commonwealth in his day and generation.

Whether this be done or not, the tradition of his robust and gentle virtues and of his manifold activities for the well-being of his State and his people, must, we repeat, long endure.

To some of us it was given to know him long and well—to sympathize with his enthusiasms and to take pride in his achievements—above all to discern the beauty of his daily life, that still lives on "in hearts he touched with fire."

To the least of these, it has seemed a pious duty to set down, even if in homeliest fashion, what he himself saw and knew of this vivid and beneficent personality, to the end that future generations shall have something more than mere tradition offered them, when they inquire how this noble "Virginia Worthy" lived and died.

For his public service they must seek the public record.

And when the young Virginian of a hundred years to come shall bend over the page that chronicles the history of his mother-state, and shall scan with kindling eye and flushing cheek the long roll of those, who have made her "glorious by

the pen" and "famous by the sword," though he shall see there greater names, which, perchance, may quicker stir the pulse's play, yet shall he see there none worthier of his reverence or of his emulation than the name of JOSEPH BRYAN.

W. GORDON McCABE.

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